

Educating Your Community About

Diabetic Retinopathy



Tips and Tools for
Making Vision a Health Priority



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
National Institutes of Health
National Eye Institute



Educating Your Community About Diabetic Retinopathy

Tips and Tools for Making Vision a Health Priority

This handbook is for people who want to help promote eye health education in their communities. It contains:

- Facts about diabetic retinopathy
- Activity suggestions
- Promotional materials
- Reproducible brochure.

This handbook is part of the Healthy Vision 2010 Toolkit. See the inside back cover for more information about the toolkit.

This handbook is from the National Eye Institute (NEI), the lead agency for Healthy Vision 2010. The NEI conducts and supports research that leads to sight-saving treatment and plays a key role in reducing visual impairment and blindness. The NEI is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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Welcome to Healthy Vision 2010

You can play an important role in helping to achieve the Healthy Vision 2010 objective to reduce visual impairment due to diabetic retinopathy. Every effort you make, large or small, is essential to getting this message out in your community.

People with diabetes should have a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year to check for early signs of diabetic retinopathy, a leading cause of visual impairment. Timely treatment and appropriate followup care can reduce the risk of blindness by 90 percent, even for people with advanced diabetic retinopathy.

Reducing visual impairment due to diabetic retinopathy is an objective of Healthy Vision 2010. Healthy Vision 2010 is one component of Healthy People 2010, a comprehensive framework for improving the health of our Nation, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

This Handbook will help you identify ways to encourage people with diabetes in your community to have a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year. The Handbook contains messages and materials you can distribute in your neighborhood, business, or community.

Some suggestions for using the materials in this Handbook include:

- ❖ Cut out, copy, and distribute the brochure, newsletter article, and print public service announcements (PSAs).
- ❖ Include the newsletter article and PSAs in your publications, or on your Intranet or Website.

- ❖ Record the radio PSAs and play them on your audio system, on-hold line, or local radio station.
- ❖ Read the suggestions in the “Help Reduce Visual Impairment...” section to see other ways that your organization or business can become part of a community-wide effort to reduce vision loss due to diabetic retinopathy.

Learn how others are helping. Get the most current information and materials and report your activities at www.healthyvision2010.org. This Website is updated regularly.

Thank you for giving your time and talents to the important effort of educating people about diabetic retinopathy and the importance of comprehensive dilated eye exams. Best wishes for your success.

A stylized graphic of an eye, composed of concentric blue and teal arcs, positioned at the top left of the page.

Help Reduce Visual Impairment Due to Diabetic Retinopathy

People with diabetes need to have a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year. This exam will help find signs of diabetic retinopathy before symptoms are noticed.

Use the ideas in this section along with the other materials in this Handbook to help reduce visual impairment from diabetic retinopathy. Use the suggestions individually or as part of a community-wide diabetic retinopathy program. Whatever you do will help.

Remember that improving people's eye health goes beyond just preventing visual impairment. Good eye health has been shown to result in improved overall health and may reduce the risk of other illness, injury, and disability. It also can increase quality and years of healthy life for people with diabetes.

To learn how local chapters of national ophthalmological, optometric, professional, or voluntary organizations are already working to develop community-wide activities and programs in your area, and to get the latest information about diabetic retinopathy, visit the Healthy Vision 2010 Website at www.healthyvision2010.org.

Answering the following questions can help you identify your target audience and will help you plan and carry out activities that will encourage people with diabetes to get a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year.

Who can benefit from information about diabetic retinopathy?

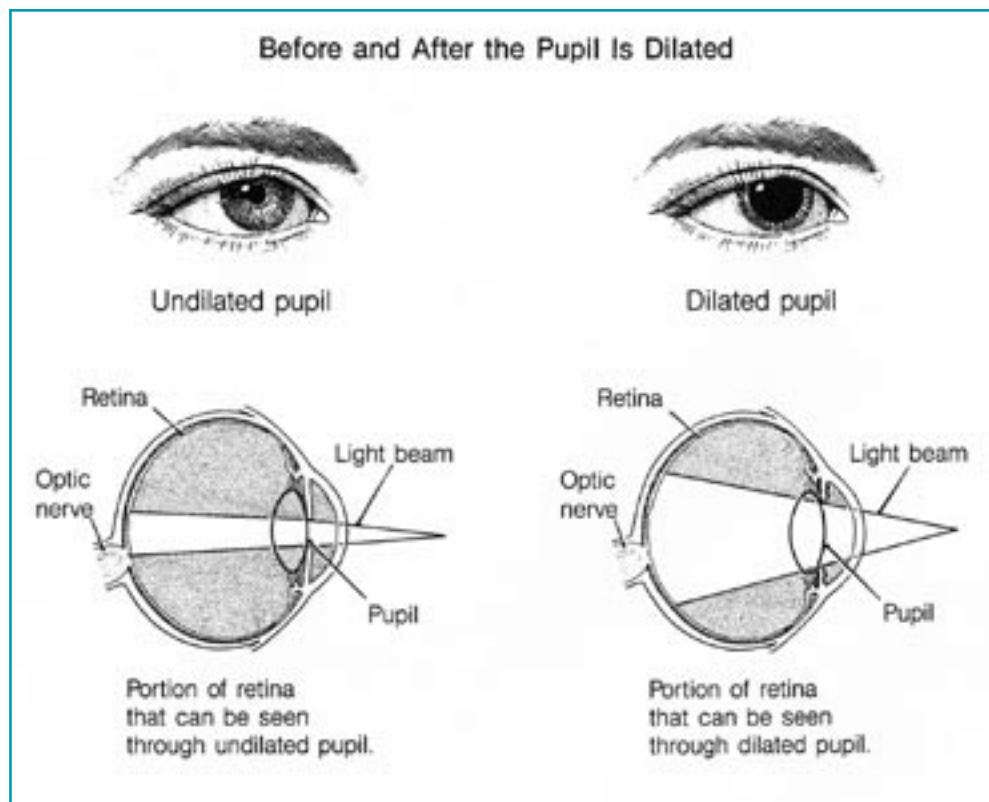
- ❖ Everyone with diabetes—both type 1 and type 2 diabetes.
- ❖ The family members, friends, coworkers, and caregivers of people with diabetes.

What does your audience need to know?

People with diabetes should have a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year to check for early signs of diabetic retinopathy, a leading cause of visual impairment. Timely treatment and appropriate followup care can reduce the risk of blindness by 90 percent, even for people with advanced diabetic retinopathy.

The longer someone has diabetes, the more likely he or she is to develop diabetic retinopathy. Of all Americans diagnosed with diabetes, between 40 and 45 percent have some degree of diabetic retinopathy.

Review the following ideas, which work as individual activities or as part of a larger eye health program in your community. Some activities may be more appropriate than others.



Community health and eye care professionals can take the lead.

- ❖ Provide diabetic retinopathy education materials, including the brochure in this Handbook and other materials available at www.healthyvision2010.org, to patients and their families.
- ❖ Encourage local health education programs to use the diabetic retinopathy brochure in this Handbook in their existing programs.
- ❖ Arrange for eye care professionals, diabetes educators, and other health professionals to speak before civic, employee, cultural, faith, and social groups.
- ❖ Offer coupons for people to use during the month of their birthday to pay for one comprehensive dilated eye exam this year and to receive next year's exam for free.
- ❖ Include diabetic retinopathy information at health clinics, health fairs, and other health promotion events.
- ❖ Include the diabetic retinopathy article in this Handbook in newsletters.
- ❖ Develop in-service training seminars at medical, health, and social service agencies. Ask hospitals to include information about diabetic retinopathy in medical continuing education programs.
- ❖ Record the radio PSAs in this Handbook and play them for callers on hold at health clinics, insurance companies, or hospitals.
- ❖ Display the diabetic retinopathy brochure in this Handbook. Use it as an insert in prescription bags, especially with prescriptions for insulin and other diabetes supplies.

Faith communities can get families involved.

- ❖ Include the PSAs and the newsletter article in your faith group's publications.
- ❖ Display information about the importance of comprehensive dilated eye exams for people at risk for diabetic retinopathy after faith services or social events.
- ❖ Host events that can raise awareness, such as a walking tour, mini-golf tournament, car wash, bicycle ride, or chess tournament.
- ❖ Arrange for faith community volunteers to remind people at risk for diabetic retinopathy of when they are due for a comprehensive dilated eye exam. Encourage them to provide transportation for visits to eye care professionals for these exams.

Community leaders can raise awareness.

- ❖ Issue a proclamation about the importance of encouraging people at risk for diabetic retinopathy to have a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year. Proclaim "Diabetic Retinopathy Outreach (Day, Week, or Month)."
- ❖ Be a spokesperson. Local community leaders, celebrities, performers, or elected officials can help raise awareness about diabetic retinopathy.
- ❖ Include diabetic retinopathy in press materials and speeches about health issues that concern people with diabetes.
- ❖ Participate in events and activities sponsored by local diabetes organizations.

Special events can reach new people.

- ❖ Schedule events during health observances, especially during Healthy Vision Month in May, which was established by the National Eye Institute (NEI) in 2003.
- ❖ Take advantage of community events such as local health fairs, parades, festivals, sports events, or diabetes walk-a-thons.
- ❖ Keep a list of people who visit exhibits or booths. Send reminder cards with an offer for people with diabetes to get one free comprehensive dilated eye exam, and get another one free for a family member or friend with diabetes.

Employers can support employees and families.

- ❖ Establish a healthy vision information center in your employee cafeteria or health center.
- ❖ Offer incentives for employees with diabetes to have a comprehensive dilated eye exam. An incentive might be a low-cost eye exam at a nearby eye care professional's office.
- ❖ Distribute the diabetic retinopathy brochure in this Handbook at annual employee health seminars, and include it with information for employees at preretirement planning seminars.
- ❖ Include a comprehensive dilated eye exam benefit in your health insurance plan for employees and their family members who have diabetes.

Businesses can support community-wide efforts.

- ❖ If your business has printing capabilities, offer to reprint materials in this Handbook or ones that you develop for your program. Include the name of your business on the materials.

- ❖ Distribute coupons for discounts on comprehensive dilated eye exams, or ask eye care professionals to offer merchant coupons to patients.
- ❖ Distribute the messages and materials in this Handbook in paycheck inserts.
- ❖ Enlarge the print PSAs to use as posters or visit www.healthyvision2010.org to find more materials.
- ❖ Put messages into people's hands through inserts in utility bills, bank statements, and shopping circulars.
- ❖ Print diabetic retinopathy messages on restaurant receipts, placemats, take-out food containers, and cups.
- ❖ Record the PSAs in this Handbook and play them on public audio systems.
- ❖ Include the newsletter article about diabetic retinopathy in this Handbook in employee and customer newsletters.
- ❖ Sponsor a health fair, make room for an exhibit, or provide space for a table or booth to provide information about diabetic retinopathy.

By taking steps to promote comprehensive dilated eye exams at least once a year for people with diabetes, you are joining thousands of other businesses, employers, health centers, medical professionals, and citizens across the country. Every effort is essential to reducing visual impairment due to diabetic retinopathy.

Share in the Success of Healthy Vision 2010

Others can learn from the activities you develop. Report your activities to your local community organizer and visit the Healthy Vision 2010 Website at www.healthyvision2010.org to share your efforts and successes. Also use the Website to learn what others are doing to help educate more people about diabetic retinopathy. Thank you for your efforts.

Some Simple Steps

- ❖ Keep track of the following:
 - Number and type of materials distributed
 - Number of people reached
 - Number and type of inquiries received about diabetic retinopathy
 - Increase in the number of comprehensive dilated eye exams
 - Media coverage: Where the newsletter or stories about your event appeared.
- ❖ After the activity or event, answer the following questions:
 - What worked?
 - What challenges did you encounter?
 - What suggestions would you give others who might plan a similar activity or event?

Facts About Diabetic Retinopathy

People with diabetes should have a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year to check for early signs of diabetic retinopathy, a leading cause of visual impairment. Timely treatment and appropriate followup care can reduce the risk of blindness by 90 percent, even for people with advanced diabetic retinopathy.

What is diabetic retinopathy?

Diabetic retinopathy occurs when diabetes damages the tiny blood vessels inside the retina, the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye. A healthy retina is necessary for good vision. In a comprehensive dilated eye exam, the eye care professional gets a better look at the retina by using eye drops to dilate (widen) the pupil.

Diabetic retinopathy often has no early warning signs. People with diabetes shouldn't wait for symptoms.



Between 40 and 45 percent of all Americans diagnosed with diabetes have some stage of diabetic retinopathy.

Who needs to know about diabetic retinopathy?

- ❖ All people with diabetes—both type 1 and type 2 diabetes.
- ❖ The family members, friends, coworkers, and caregivers of people with diabetes.

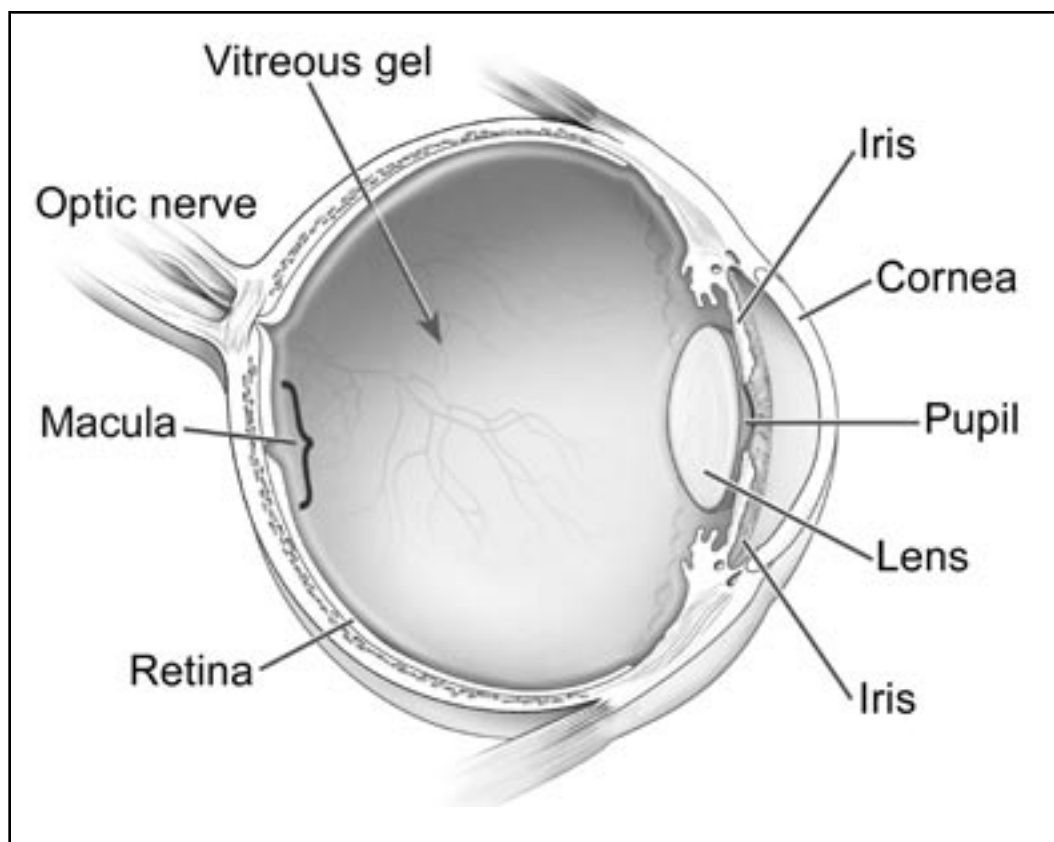
What are the symptoms?

At first, people may notice no symptoms, warning signs, or changes to their vision. However, diabetic retinopathy can get worse over time and cause vision loss.

How does diabetic retinopathy cause vision loss?

Blood vessels damaged from diabetic retinopathy can cause vision loss in two ways:

- ❖ Fragile, abnormal blood vessels can develop and leak blood into the center of the eye, blurring vision.
- ❖ Fluid can leak into the center of the macula, the part of the eye where sharp, straight-ahead vision occurs. The fluid makes the macula swell, blurring vision. Diabetic retinopathy usually affects both eyes.



How is diabetic retinopathy detected?

Diabetic retinopathy is detected during a comprehensive dilated eye exam. The eye care professional uses eye drops to dilate (widen) the pupil to get a better look at the retina.

Can diabetic retinopathy be treated?

Yes. Your eye care professional may suggest laser surgery. He or she places 1,000 to 2,000 laser burns in the areas of the retina away from the macula, causing the abnormal blood vessels to shrink. Scatter laser treatment can save the rest of a person's sight. If a patient has a lot of blood in the center of the eye, a vitrectomy can be effective in reducing vision loss. A vitrectomy replaces the gel in the center of the eye with a salt solution.

Can diabetic retinopathy be cured?

No. Although treatments have high success rates, they do not cure diabetic retinopathy. Vision that has already been lost cannot be restored. Diagnosing the disease early is the best way to prevent vision loss. With timely treatment and appropriate followup care, even people with advanced diabetic retinopathy can reduce the risk of blindness by 90 percent.

What can I do to protect my vision?

People with diabetes should have a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year to check for early signs of diabetic retinopathy. People with diabetic retinopathy may need an eye exam more often.

A major study has shown that better control of blood sugar levels slows the onset and progression of diabetic retinopathy. Ask your eye care professional if such a control program is right for you.



Here is an article you can put in your company or organizational newsletter or post on your company bulletin board or Intranet.

If You Have Diabetes, Get a Comprehensive Dilated Eye Exam

People with diabetes should have a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year to check for early signs of diabetic retinopathy, a leading cause of visual impairment. Timely treatment and appropriate followup care can reduce the risk of blindness by 90 percent, even for people with advanced diabetic retinopathy.

Diabetic retinopathy occurs when diabetes damages the tiny blood vessels inside the retina, the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye. A healthy retina is necessary for good vision. In a comprehensive dilated eye exam, the eye care professional gets a better look at the retina by using eye drops to dilate (widen) the pupil.

Diabetic retinopathy often has no early warning signs. People with diabetes shouldn't wait for symptoms.

Between 40 and 45 percent of all Americans diagnosed with diabetes have some stage of diabetic retinopathy.

Early detection leads to early treatment, which is important in reducing vision loss from this disease. With timely treatment and appropriate followup care, people with advanced diabetic retinopathy can reduce their risk of blindness by 90 percent.

Diabetic retinopathy is most often treated with laser surgery, which seals leaking blood vessels or destroys abnormal ones. Controlling elevated blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels may help slow the onset and progression of the disease and reduce the risk of vision loss.

For more information about diabetic retinopathy, visit the Healthy Vision 2010 Website at www.healthyvision2010.org, sponsored by the National Eye Institute (NEI) and the Healthy Vision Consortium.

The NEI conducts and supports research that leads to sight-saving treatment and plays a key role in reducing visual impairment and blindness. The NEI is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



Radio Public Service Announcements

Diabetic Retinopathy

Radio PSAs:

30-second spot

“Keep an Eye On It”

Station announcer:

If you have diabetes, there's something you should keep your eye on.

Your sight.

Because if you don't, diabetic eye disease can take it away. It can affect anyone with diabetes—young, old, men, women, any race.

But it can be treated and your vision can be saved, if you see it coming—through a comprehensive dilated eye exam.

If you have diabetes, get a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year.

For more information, contact [insert sponsoring organization's name].

15-second spot

“Keep an Eye On It”

Station announcer:

If you have diabetes, keep an eye on your sight.

Because diabetic eye disease can take it away.

The only way to treat it is to see it coming through a comprehensive dilated eye exam.

If you have diabetes, get a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year.

A message from [insert the name of the sponsoring organization].

30-second spot

“Don’t Miss It”

Station announcer:

Got diabetes?

If so, there’s one exam you don’t want to miss—a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year.

All people with diabetes are at risk for diabetic retinopathy, which can cause vision loss.

A comprehensive dilated eye exam is the only way to check for early signs of diabetic retinopathy.

Take care of your diabetes to save your life. Get a comprehensive dilated eye exam to save your sight.

Don’t miss it.

For more information, contact [insert the name of the sponsoring organization].

15-second spot

“Don’t Miss It”

Station announcer:

Got diabetes?

If so, you need a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year.

It’s the only way to check for early signs of diabetic retinopathy, which can cause vision loss.


Get a comprehensive dilated eye exam.

Don’t miss this important step in managing your diabetes.

A message from [insert the name of the sponsoring organization].




Print Public Service Announcements



The world is
a beautiful sight.
Don't let
diabetic eye disease
take it away.

If you have diabetes, get
a dilated eye exam every year.



**U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services**
National Institutes of Health
National Eye Institute

**IF YOU
HAVE
DIABETES,
TAKE A
CLOSER
LOOK
AT YOUR
EYES**



**GET A
DILATED
EYE
EXAM
EVERY
YEAR.**



**U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services**
National Institutes of Health
National Eye Institute

Add your logo and copy this brochure to hand out at your events, or add an address on the back and mail it out.



For more information about diabetic retinopathy,
visit the Healthy Vision 2010 Website at
www.healthyvision2010.org.

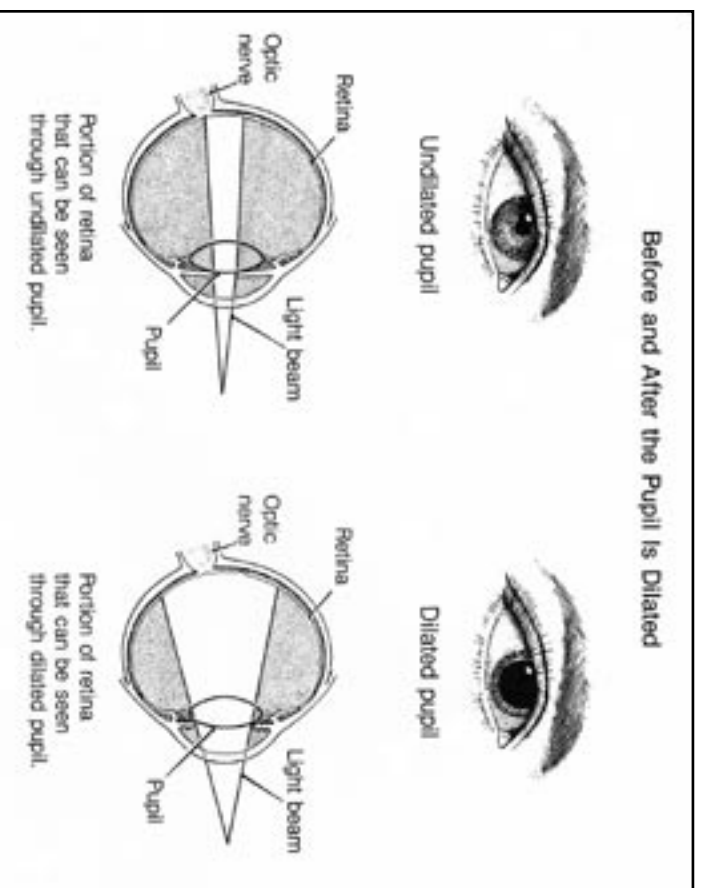
If You Have Diabetes, Get a Comprehensive Dilated Eye Exam

People with diabetes should have a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year to check for early signs of diabetic retinopathy, a leading cause of visual impairment. Timely treatment and appropriate followup care can reduce the risk of blindness by 90 percent, even for people with advanced diabetic retinopathy.

Why do people with diabetes need comprehensive dilated eye exams?

The early stages of diabetic retinopathy often





have no warning signs. People with the disease can go years without ever knowing they have it. In fact, between 40 and 45 percent of people with diagnosed diabetes have some form of the disease. The longer you have diabetes, the more likely you are to develop diabetic retinopathy.

A comprehensive dilated eye exam allows your eye care professional to look for signs of eye disease by examining your retina, the light-sensitive tissue

at the back of your eyes. In people with diabetic retinopathy, leaking blood vessels can cause vision loss.

Can diabetic retinopathy be treated?

Yes. If diabetic retinopathy is diagnosed and treated early, additional vision loss can be avoided. However, vision already lost cannot be restored. Leaking blood vessels can be repaired and extra blood vessels can be removed.

How can you protect your vision?

The best protection is to get a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year.

A major study has shown that better control of blood pressure, cholesterol, and sugar levels slows the onset and progression of diabetic retinopathy. Ask your eye care professional if such a control program is right for you.

Healthy Vision 2010 Toolkit

The Healthy Vision 2010 Toolkit is an interactive CD-ROM that includes Handbooks, the Community Action Guide, and the Speaker's Guide. These resources also are available on the Web at www.healthyvision2010.org/, and are targeted to those who want to make vision a health priority in their communities.

- **The handbooks** each focus on a different Healthy Vision 2010 objective. They include community-based activity suggestions, newspaper/newsletter articles, public service announcements, and brochures to copy and to hand out.
- **The Community Action Guide** includes a planning timeline, media materials, tips for involving your community, and more.
- **The Speaker's Guide** contains presentations to engage and inform communities about eye health. PowerPoint, Word, and Acrobat versions of each presentation, along with speaker's notes, are included. Topics include injury and safety, eye disease, vision rehabilitation, and others.

Healthy Vision 2010 Objectives

Healthy People 2010, the prevention framework of the Nation, challenges individuals, communities, and professionals to take specific steps to ensure that good health and long life are enjoyed by all. Healthy Vision 2010 refers to the vision objectives in Focus Area 28 of Healthy People 2010.

Following are the 10 vision objectives:

- 28-1 Increase the proportion of persons who have a dilated eye examination at appropriate intervals.
- 28-2 Increase the proportion of preschool children aged 5 years and under who receive vision screening.
- 28-3 Reduce uncorrected visual impairment due to refractive errors.
- 28-4 Reduce blindness and visual impairment in children and adolescents aged 17 years and under.
- 28-5 Reduce visual impairment due to diabetic retinopathy.
- 28-6 Reduce visual impairment due to glaucoma.
- 28-7 Reduce visual impairment due to cataract.
- 28-8 Reduce occupational eye injury.
- 28-9 Increase the use of appropriate personal protective eyewear in recreational activities and hazardous situations around the home.
- 28-10 Increase vision rehabilitation.
 - 28-10a Increase the use of rehabilitation services by persons with visual impairments.
 - 28-10b Increase the use of visual and adaptive devices by persons with visual impairments.

For copies and information, please visit www.healthyvision2010.org.

